

titles, the name of John Norris appears most frequently. Norris wove together the strands of moralism, mysticism, and rationalism in a theology of holiness and happiness that the Wesley brothers found philosophically and existentially attractive. He appealed to the heart and provided spiritual motivation for the reader to live a holy life, affirming that 'the Design of the Christian Dispensation is to perfect Holiness, to advance the interest of the Divine Life, to elevate us in the utmost Degree of Moral Perfection our Nature is here capable of, and, as far as possible, to make us Partakers of the Divine.'¹⁹

The entire spiritual journey depends upon divine initiative, the grace of God at work in ways which are initially imperceptible (preventive grace), then felt in the yearning of the heart (convincing grace) until one experiences saving faith or the new birth (justifying grace), followed by the conscious journey toward spiritual maturity or spiritual adulthood (sanctifying grace) and active engagement in God's mission to reach as many other people as possible. Thoroughly grounded in the two biblical commandments of love for God and love for neighbor (which the Wesley brothers summarize in the phrases 'works of piety' and 'works of mercy'), the spiritual life involves the intentional practice of the 'means of grace.' While there is an individual or personal dimension of Methodist spirituality, the means of grace were also to be practiced in the family, in small groups, and in the gathered congregation.

The Centrality of Prayer

John and Charles Wesley's first publication was *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week* (1733) based on a 170-page manuscript prayer manual developed from 1727 to 1733.²⁰ The published volume consists of morning and evening prayers for each day of the week including 'Something of Deprecation, Petition, Thanksgiving and Intercession.' It included, 'in the Course of Petitions for the Week, the whole Scheme of our Christian Duty.'²¹ For each day, as a part of evening prayer, there are questions for reflection related to essential spiritual virtues: Sunday was focused on the love of God, Monday on love of neighbor, Tuesday on humility, Wednesday mortification, Thursday resignation and meekness, Friday returned to the theme of mortification, and Saturday focused on thankfulness. Readers learned to pray by praying significant prayers and received spiritual guidance to give 'the whole heart and the whole life to God.'²²

John and Charles Wesley understood that prayer is to the spiritual life, what oxygen is to the body. One's spiritual life would soon be extinguished without the breathings of prayer to inspire and give it motion. They were convinced that the person born of God,

feels 'the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto him' . . . he is alive to God through Jesus Christ . . . God is

continually breathing, as it were, upon his soul, and his soul is breathing unto God. Grace is descending into his heart, and prayer and praise ascending to heaven. And by this intercourse between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of spiritual respiration, the life of God in the soul is sustained: and the child of God grows up, till he comes to 'the full measure of the stature of Christ.'²³

Prayer, according to the Wesleys, 'is the lifting up of the heart to God: all words of prayer, without this are mere hypocrisy. Whenever therefore thou attemptest to pray, see that it be thy one design to commune with God, to lift up thy heart to him, to pour out thy soul before him.'²⁴ Prayer is the foundation for everything else in the spiritual life because 'God does nothing but in answer to prayer; and even they who have been converted to God without praying for it themselves, (which is exceeding rare,) were not without the prayers of others. Every new victory which a soul gains is the effect of a new prayer.'²⁵

For those unable to read and those who felt inadequate to form words in prayer, they learned that 'a continual desire is a continual prayer'; therefore, any person, from the youngest child to the most elderly adult is capable of praying in this manner.²⁶ The aim was to pray as Jesus prayed in order to live as Jesus lived – between the mountain of prayer and ministry to the multitude of people in need. In the words of Charles Wesley:

How happy, gracious Lord, are we!
Divinely drawn to follow thee;
Whose hours divided are.
Betwixt the mount and multitude:
Our day is spent in doing good;
Our night in praise and prayer.²⁷

A Clear Vision

The aim of the Christian life is union with God. John Wesley's sermon before the University in 1733 made it clear that participation in the divine life is the essence of Christian existence:

One thing shall ye desire for its own sake – the fruition of him that is all in all. One happiness shall ye propose to your souls, even an union with him that made them, the having 'fellowship with the Father and the Son,'²⁸

The Clear Path

John Wesley's sermon 'The Scripture Way of Salvation' clearly expresses the Methodist understanding that salvation is 'the entire work of God, from

the first drawings of grace on the soul till it is consummated in glory.' Justification by grace through faith is pardon, a *relative* change in one's status before God, and in that same instant the process of sanctification begins. The spiritual new birth is analogous to the physical birth of a child. There is a real as well as a relative change because one is 'born from above,' 'born of the Spirit.' Drawing on the wisdom of Macarius, John Wesley warns the new born Christian that sin may appear to be entirely removed; however, it can and often does return. The gradual work of sanctification enables one to begin to walk in the Spirit, to learn to mortify the deeds of the flesh and willfully abstain from evil. The believer must 'go on to perfection,' that is, spiritual maturity. Sanctification is a *real* change that takes place in the hearts and lives of those who become new creatures in Christ. Spiritual maturity or full salvation is the ultimate goal of the spiritual life; the means of grace are pathways to that goal.²⁹

The Means of Grace

The means of grace are spiritual practices or activities that connect the believer to God in Christ through the gracious activity of the Holy Spirit. John and Charles Wesley instructed their followers to 'use' all the means of grace in order to grow in their relationship with God and neighbor. These included the 'instituted' means of grace identified explicitly in scripture (worship, prayer, searching the scriptures, fasting, and spiritual conversation) and the 'prudential' means of grace implicit in the Bible (intentional spiritual practices such as keeping a spiritual journal, participating in small groups for spiritual instruction and reproof, and some form of leadership development). These means were directly connected to the Methodist understanding that 'the Spirit and discipline make a Christian.' In Methodism there is a dual emphasis on helping Christians experience the empowering presence of God and being formed in the character of God.³⁰

The Wesleys were also careful to distinguish between spiritual practices that were a 'means' to an authentic relationship with God and the false understanding that treated spiritual disciplines as a goal, or 'end' in themselves:

... in using all means, seek God alone. In and through every outward thing, look singly to the *power* of His Spirit, and the *merits* of His Son. Beware you do not stick in the *work* itself; if you do, it is all lost labor. Nothing short of God can satisfy your soul.³¹

Methodist spirituality and practice made it clear that the means of grace are appropriate for use at any and every stage of the spiritual journey. Regardless of whether one has a small interest in spiritual things, or is spiritually awakened and convinced of the need for God, or born again and growing in

grace, or spiritually mature, using all the means of grace continues to be essential. Every person created in the image of God is capable of an eternal relationship with God, a relationship where the potential for spiritual growth has no end.³²

An Intentional Community

The centrality of the Methodist small groups cannot be overlooked or neglected. From their earliest days in Oxford, the Wesley brothers learned the value of having spiritual friends and companions who shared the same desire for God and a willingness to engage in intentional spiritual exercises to help form and transform one into the image and likeness of Christ.

The Methodist small group structures began in the early years of the Oxford period (1729-1730). These groups were comprised of university students who gathered to pray, study scripture, read books of spiritual guidance, and engage in spiritual conversation. They held each other accountable for keeping a spiritual journal, and regular participation in public worship and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In August 1730, at the behest of one of the group's members, William Morgan, Jr., the Wesleys began visiting inmates at the local prison. This experience transformed their lives. Until this time the focus of the Holy Club was on 'works of piety'; now spiritual practice expanded to include what they would later describe as 'works of mercy' (i.e., ministry with the poor, sick, and imprisoned). This launched them into active involvement in social justice and local mission beyond the university. This change was powerful and permanent; it connected love for God (expressed in acts of devotion, study, worship, prayer, and praise) with love for neighbor (in acts of compassion, witness, and social justice).

The first Methodist **band** meeting was formed in London in May 1738, a joint venture with the Moravians. The rules for the bands were published in December 1738 and bear the distinctive touch of the Wesley brothers. These Christians were joined with others who had an equal desire to grow in grace and who shared a common situation in life. There were separate groups for married women, married men, single women, and single men. There were even bands for children and youth, with boys and girls meeting in separate bands.³³

Before joining a band, personal experience of justifying grace and saving faith was required. Thus, some degree of spiritual maturity was presupposed and the spiritual guidance offered by the leader could focus on deeper understanding and experience of the Christian life.

The **select band** (or **select society**) was first mentioned in John Wesley's diary entry for Wednesday, 20 May 1741, 4:00 p.m. in Bristol.³⁴ It was the place where Christians of maturing faith could support one another in

in his earlier, *The Advantage of the Members of the Church of England over Those of the Church of Rome* (1756), he grumbled about its doctrine not being founded in scripture. Of the twenty-four Articles of Religion sent to the American Methodists, seven attacked Roman Catholicism. Yet, Wesley admired the holiness emphasis present in Catholic writers such as Gregory Lopez and Marquis de Renty. Furthermore, his irenic, *Letter to a Roman Catholic* (1749), pleaded, '... if we cannot as yet think alike in all things, at least we can love alike.' Relations between Methodists and Roman Catholics were generally strained, if not openly antagonistic, until post-World War II and the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Since 1967 dialogues between the **World Methodist Council** and the Roman Catholic Church have shown promise and have developed a more amicable relationship between the two traditions.

DMBI, 300; Butler, David, *Methodists and Papists* (1995); Wainwright, Geoffrey, *Methodists in Dialog* (1995). C.Y.

Sacraments

Methodists follow **John Wesley** in recognizing Baptism and the Lord's Supper as their two sacraments, the means of grace through which God works invisibly, not only to quicken faith, but also to strengthen and confirm it. They do not, however, always adhere to Wesley's sacramental theology and practice.

Wesley attuned Methodism to the sacramental understanding of the early Christians, who, building theologically upon Jesus' metaphors, 'This is my body,' 'This is my blood,' believed in the real presence of Christ in the eucharist. Both John and **Charles Wesley** stressed the mystery of that presence: 'Who shall say how Bread and Wine / GOD into Man conveys?' Christ's presence is real; how it is realized is unknown. In the early church, the Lord's Supper climaxed every-Sunday worship; Wesley strove to restore that practice in Methodism.

Wesley, in harmony with the first Christians, understood the sacrament of baptism as a 'washing of the Holy Ghost.' Clement of Alexandria called it the sacrament 'by which we are cleansed from the filth of our sins.' Wesley never doubted that God washes us in baptism, but he emphasized that because we sin away that washing, we need to be regenerated.

Methodists after Wesley weakened his sacramental theology and frequently ignored his instructions concerning practice. British and American Methodists alike continued to baptize infants as well as adults, but theological erosion carried away major portions of the belief that God works in the sacrament to

quicken, strengthen, or confirm faith. Often all that remained was the idea that baptism is a ceremony for naming children and dedicating them to God.

Methodists on both sides of the Atlantic never followed Wesley's injunction to celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday; quarterly or monthly communion was the norm. And the belief that the bread and wine mysteriously convey God into humans yielded to the view that the Lord's Supper is a time of remembering Jesus' last meal and death.

An ecumenical renaissance of liturgical studies, which began in the 1930s, focused, as Wesley did, on the sacramental theology and practice of the early Christians. Methodists rediscovered the pattern for Sunday worship that combines Word (Scripture readings, sermon) and Table (Lord's Supper). New books of worship of the British Methodists (1975, 1999) and the United Methodist Church in the United States (1989, 1992) feature a service of Word and Table as their basic worship plan. But most congregations do not celebrate the Lord's Supper every week at their principal Sunday services. Likewise, new rituals that present baptism as an act of God through the church do not seem to have significantly influenced most Methodists.

DMBI, 18–19, 211–212, 235, 305; HDM, 40–42, 108–109, 267; Felton, Gayle Carlton, *This Gift of Water: The Theology and Practice of Baptism Among Methodists in America* (1992); Stevick, Daniel B., *The Altar's Fire: Charles Wesley's Hymns on the Lord's Supper, 1745–Introduction and Comment* (2004). J.M.

Salvation, Wesleyan Way of

John Wesley, not a systematic theologian in the classical sense, described the pathway of Christian discipleship in his sermons and other writings. It consisted of at least six main themes, all centered around the God's grace, God's unmerited, undeserved, unearned love for all people.

(1) Original sin. While human beings, created in God's image, are made to enjoy life with God and each other, there is a great chasm between what God intends them to be and what they really are. They yield to idolatry, loving things more than the Creator and preferring to do what they please rather than doing the will of the One who made them. Furthermore, they exploit, neglect, are uncharitable, or in other ways unjustly offend their neighbors. Humans fail to love God and their neighbors as Jesus taught. The universal problem is sin which Wesley described as a 'fatal leprosy' which consumes human life. Who can cure them of this disease and renew God's image in them? See John Wesley's sermon, 'Original Sin' (1759).

(2) Preventing grace. The term literally means 'the grace that comes before,' and is usually today termed 'preventive grace.' John Wesley spoke of it as

God's grace, 'free in all, and free for all.' It is present not only in the life of Christians, but in those of other faiths, even in the life of the atheist and agnostic. Preventing grace not only awakens humans to the gravity of sin and points them in the direction of new life, but most importantly, it frees them to accept God's offer of forgiveness and reconciliation, healing the disease of sin in each and all. Preventing grace moves people to repentant change. It was their commitment to the biblical notion of God's preventing grace, and the freedom it conveys, which led John and Charles Wesley to reject Calvinistic predestination which denied human free will. The writings and hymn-poems of the Wesley brothers rejected the teachings of the Calvinists and affirmed the reality of God's preventing grace available to all. See John Wesley's sermon, 'The Scripture Way of Salvation' (1765).

(3) Justification by faith. Setting their faith solidly in the message of scripture and the insights of the Protestant Reformation, the Wesleys declared that salvation from sin is a gift of God which is appropriated by faith. God's preventing grace prepares people for a new relationship with God. God's justifying grace accepts and sets them free from sin and its consequences. Justification is especially related to the life and ministry of Jesus, although salvation, just as creation, was understood by the Wesleys to be the work of all Three Persons of the trinitarian God. As the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus occupied a special place in God's plan of salvation. John and Charles Wesley understood Jesus as Prophet, Priest, and King. As priest, Jesus offered his life as a sacrifice for sin and makes possible forgiveness, redemption, and justification. See John Wesley's sermon, 'Justification by Faith' (1746).

(4) New birth. There is an experiential dimension to salvation. Justification by faith is what God does for us. The new birth, which accompanies justification, is what God does in us. It is an inward, entire change which transforms the sinner from the image of Satan to the image of God. See John Wesley's sermon, 'The New Birth' (1760).

(5) Assurance. To those who are justified, the Spirit of God bears witness that they are God's children. This is apparently what John Wesley himself experienced on 24 May 1738 when he wrote that 'an assurance' had been given to him that Christ removed his sins and that he was indeed a child of God. See his sermon, 'Witness of the Spirit I' (1746).

(6) Holiness of heart and life, or sanctification. God intends all of his faithful people to live a life of holy thinking, speaking, and acting. Such holy living fulfills Jesus' summary of the commandments that we should love God with all we are and have, and love our neighbors (everyone else) as we love ourselves. This is the genuine substance of Christianity. Furthermore, John Wesley believed that it is God's intention that, by grace, we attain Christian perfection where love for God and neighbor becomes the controlling affection of one's life and we live as Jesus lived. John Wesley believed that by God's

grace the attainment of Christian perfection was possible in this life. His brother Charles disagreed, holding that it is only realized as believers pass from this life to the next. See John Wesley's sermon, 'Christian Perfection' (1741). Holiness of heart and life leading to Christian perfection is not achieved without the use of gifts, 'means of grace,' which God gives to nurture holy living. These include reading and studying scripture, prayer, fasting, Christian fellowship, and the Lord's Supper. Wesley referred to the use of such gifts as 'works of piety.' Authentic holy living is displayed in acts of love and justice, what Wesley called, 'works of mercy,' such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and resisting evil forces in the world. Important summaries of Wesley's views are found in his sermons, especially, 'The Scripture Way of Salvation' (1765), 'The Means of Grace' (1746), and 'Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, VI' (1748).

Collins, Kenneth J., *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (2007); Klaiber, Walter and Manfred Marguardt, *Living Grace: An Outline of United Methodist Theology* (2001); Maddox, Randy L., *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (1994).
C.Y.

Salvation Army

Originally known as the Christian Mission, the Salvation Army was founded in London's east end by British Methodist New Connexion clergyman William Booth and his wife Catherine. Its present name was adopted in 1878. By that time it had been organized along military lines with a general at its head and a requirement that its members render unquestioning obedience to its directives. Booth's son, William Bramwell Booth, assumed the generalship of the Army upon his father's death, but beginning in 1931 the High Council of the Army, which includes its commanders and leading officers, has chosen its leader. The Army's basic theology has traditionally been evangelical. It rejects both sacraments and emphasizes Christian morality. Although the Army operates headquarters and centers in a multitude of places, it has historically employed open-air meetings with its celebrated brass bands and banners. At its urban centers it oversees programs for the poor and homeless, alcoholics, hospitals, day care, and schools. While its ministry operates in more than a hundred nations, it is especially active in the United States.

Green, Roger J., *The Life and Ministry of William Booth, Founder of the Salvation Army* (2005); Sandall, Robert, Arch R. Wiggins, Frederick Counts, *The History of the Salvation Army*, 7 vols. (1947-1986).
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